



"HAVE YOU TRIED TURNING IT OFF AND ON AGAIN?"

CULTURAL LEARNINGS OF AMERICA FOR MAKE BENEFIT GLORIOUS NATION OF INDIA

If you are currently watching a TV Series, there is a high probability that it is a comedy or thriller. If it is a comedy, then the chances of it being an American one is higher. The main exports of America are undoubtedly Aids and Entertainment. But just across the pond from this great nation is a country that exported most of them. I am, of course, talking about Britain. The UK has produced arguably the most successful comedic series of all times, namely Mr Bean, but your average Indian Joe will not have seen much more than that. Most of us might have heard names like Seinfeld, Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, FRIENDS (insert vomit here), The Big Bang Theory but names like Fawty Towers, Blackadder, Mind Your Language, The Inbetweeners and The IT Crowd are scarcely the ones that come to one's mind when they think about comedy.

As a result of this influx of American content primarily through US owned entities like Amazon, Netflix and YouTube, classic British shows airing on BBC Four are somewhat lost. In recent years, the BBC has made efforts into putting their programmes on platforms like Amazon Prime, Netflix and Facebook, but one has to mine deep to find these absolute gems. And it is here that one night while scrolling through my Facebook feed that I discovered The IT Crowd.

ON THE TOPIC OF DEBATE

Now the analysis of the difference between British comedy and American comedy became a point of discussion after the unexpected success of the reboot of the hit Stephen Merchant show, The Office, on American television. This was the first time that an American remake of a hit British show had gained popularity albeit with changes brought in after the first season. Ricky Gervais, co-writer and lead in the British version was the first one to throw light on the matter followed by the legendary comedian and thinker Stephen Fry. The best way to put the difference would be the following quote:

"AMERICAN HUMOUR IS WHEN THE MAIN CHARACTER SAYS A JOKE. BRITISH HUMOUR IS WHEN THE MAIN CHARACTER IS A JOKE."

When you watch a British comedy for the first time, you will find that the scenes are much gloomier, the characters are stupid and are total losers at their jobs. In the IT Crowd, we see the characters of Roy and Maurice who are nerds working in the IT department of Reynholm Industries. Their department head Jen does not know anything about IT but lies her way into the job. Denholm (and later Douglas) who was the CEO of the company, does

not have any idea about what he is supposed to do either. In contrast, let us take The Big Bang Theory for example. The main characters there have certain goals, and they achieve it. Sheldon wants to win the Nobel Prize, Leonard wants to marry Penny, Penny wants to be an actress and Howard goes to space. From the beginning, we see them take steps which bring them closer to their goals. Whereas there is no sense of direction in the lives in the IT department. Jen wants to get a different job but does not know what kind of job she wants. Denholm wants to make Reynholm Industries successful but does not know how. Maurice and Roy are content with their current jobs and have no aspirations as such and actively resist changes to their status.



The Big Bang Theory and The IT Crowd both draw on the awkwardness of the nerdy characters for humour. Roy and Moss are uncomfortable around women just like the four guys in TBBT. They have no social skills, make fun of people who are not nerds, do not care much for sports, do nerdy stuff like countdown (ITC) and D&D and devote time to their geeky interests. But we see the characters in TBBT evolve whereas in The IT Crowd, there is no character development which is to be expected from a “proper” sitcom.

FATAL ATTRACTIONS

At this point I must concede that there are other better British sitcoms too. But there is none quite like the IT Crowd. You will be disappointed at the number of episodes, which is about 30 across 4 seasons, with each episode being not more than 30 mins long. The characters were also changed in the middle. The character of Chris Morris (Denholm Reynholm) had to be killed off and was replaced by the funnier Matt Berry (Douglas Reynholm). Although the characters were not the same, they shared the same functional goal, a crazy boss figure who had no idea of what was going on in the company. But after his introduction, we get to see a bit more of the personal activities of the eccentric figure.

Not to get too carried away with my enthusiasm for the show, I had some people, who match the profile of the probable readers of this article, watch the show while I recorded their reactions. The first episode, they felt, were not that funny. It took a lot of explanations to get them accustomed to the references. Things took off from the second episode.

CONCLUSION:

WATCH IT. IT WILL TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO, BUT IT IS HILARIOUS AFTERWARDS.

